THE CASE OF THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE

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Memorandum to the United Nations Conference

On International Organization

In San Francisco

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Respectfully Submitted

by the

ARMENIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA

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"Even Mt. Ararat, the pride and glory of our people and the most expressive symbol of their hopes and aspirations for a thousand years, remains under Turkish rule."

The Case of the Armenian People

The Armenian National Council of America as Spokesman

The Armenian National Council of America, which is comprised of and supported by all the Armenian civic, social, cultural and religious organizations in the United States, except a small fascist faction known as the Tashnags,* presents the case of the Armenian people to the delegations of the United Nations Conference on International Organization assembled in San Francisco.

The Armenian people have a claim at the bar of international justice. They demand the righting of the grievous wrong done to them for centuries, a wrong which continues to the present day.

The Historical Perspective of the Case of the Armenian People

The case of the Armenian people possesses a special significance by virtue of their long and noble history and their contributions to world civilization and culture. The Armenians are one of the few ancient peoples of the world who have survived to the present day. Their history goes back to the very beginnings of civilization on the plains of Mesopotamia. They were organized into a strong political state in very early times, and had important ties with the great states and empires of the ancient world. Through their long history they have demonstrated that they are a freedom-loving people. They were among the pioneers of the civilization and culture which the modern world inherited from the ancient world. They were the first nation to accept Christianity. Ever since then they have stood as a bulwark against the invading hordes from the interiors of Asia.

*Who have presented themselves to this Conference as the "Armenian National Committee."

Against a background such as this the claim of the Armenian people deserves special consideration at the bar of international justice.

The Advent of the Terrible Turk in History

It is a notorious fact in history that the Turks, ever since their appearance in the Near East, the Balkans, and Central Europe, maintained their rule over the countries they overran through a system of ruthless, calculated, sustained terror. Against Christian peoples especially, their wrath was loosed with unmitigated fury. Over them they imposed and maintained their rule through such instruments of terror and domination as periodic massacres, officially sanctioned lootings, discriminatory taxations, deportations, starvation, disease, rape, abduction, prohibition of the use of native tongues, and the abrogation of other fundamental political and civic rights. The long, black record of the terrible Turk is there for all to see. No word of apology can expunge one single line from its bloody pages.

Armenians Singled Out as the Object of a Particularly Vicious Persecution

The Armenians were singled out as the object of a particularly vicious persecution. Among the reasons for this may be mentioned the strategic position of their land between continents, their superior culture and historical background, their love of creative labor, their resourcefulness and perseverance, and their devotion to the ideals of freedom and independence.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the persecution to which the Armenians were subjected by the Turks took on serious proportions. Massacres which hitherto had been a periodic occurrence in scattered communities were put on schedule on a nationwide scale. In the two years 1895 and 1896 hundreds of thousands of Armenians were put through the sword throughout the length and breadth

of Turkish Armenia. Even in 1908, when Turkey took on some of the trappings of democracy, the massacres continued in many localities all the way from Van to Cilicia.

During the first World War Turkish barbarism sank to its lowest and most hideous depths. Goaded and guided by the Germans, who saw in the Armenians the one effective obstruction to their political and economic ambitions in the Ottoman Empire, the Turks conceived and attempted to carry into execution the total extermination of the Armenian people. And they almost succeeded in doing so. Through deportations, starvation, disease, and outright slaughter they succeeded in reducing by more than one-half the Armenian population in the Armenian provinces of Turkey—a net loss of more than one million souls. Those who survived found themselves poverty-stricken, homeless immigrants in Iran, Iraq, Syria, the Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, Bulgaria, Roumania, France, and the Americas. Today there are a million and a half Armenians from Turkish Armenia in these countries who, with few exceptions and despite the generous efforts of their host countries to rehabilitate them, are still refugees looking forward to the day when they will be united on the historic land of their forefathers to work out their own salvation and make their distinctive contribution to the life of the world.

The Armenians and the Allies of World War I

It is worthy of note that Armenians did not resign to the fate meted out to them by the Turks. They fought back. The history of their heroic resistance in many sections of the country forms one of the glorious chapters in the annals of our people. They brought their moral and material support to the cause of the Allies. Their sons enlisted by the thousands in the Allied armies and distinguished themselves in battles against the armies of the common foe.

The Allies, in return for the contributions which the Armenian people brought to the great cause of freedom and democracy, promised their liberation and their

establishment as an independent state. And in accordance with that promise the League of Nations authorized President Woodrow Wilson to draw the boundaries of a free and independent Armenia. This was accepted by all the powers of the day, including Turkey. It was ratified by the Treaty of Sevres.

That Treaty, however, was never enforced. One after another the sacred promises so solemnly made were forgotten or sacrificed to the selfish interests of powerful states. And so would have ended, as the final act of the tragedy of the Armenian people, had not the great Russian people and the other peoples of the U. S. S. R. come to the rescue and salvaged something out of what otherwise would have been the total ruin and annihilation of the Armenian people.

The Armenians and the United Nations of World War II

During World War II the Armenians once more gave proof of their devotion to democracy and the cause of the United Nations. They fought once more with distinction within the armies of the United States and the United Nations. Fifty generals and over a quarter of a million Armenian soldiers of various ranks were within the Red Army alone. Armenian blood flowed once more, this time not for something which they wished to possess, but for something which they already possessed and wished to protect.

"Can the Leopard Change Her Spots or the Ethiopian His Skin?"

And what did the now so-called republican Turk do in this late war for the liberation of the world from the threat of Nazi tyranny? They sought shelter under the cloak of a spurious neutrality, extending meanwhile to the Nazis assistance of every description which lay within their power. They went further and shamelessly

proclaimed their desire to see a German victory. And they continued to oppress and liquidate the few hundred thousand Armenians who were still living in their borders.

On What Matters Armenians of the Diaspora Do Not Speak

We, the Armenians who are living outside Soviet Armenia, do not presume to speak in the name of that republic, nor do we presume to dictate or outline her policies or interests. These are the singular rights of the people who live in Soviet Armenia. We can only express our appreciation to the great Russian people and the other peoples of the U. S. S. R. for giving our brothers in the land of our origin the opportunity to live again as a free and independent nation; to clear the debris of the oppression and destruction perpetrated for centuries; to transform their country once more to a *trakhdavayr,* that is, the land of paradise, as the Armenians put it; to reestablish a stable government of their own; to reorganize their social and economic life; and to revive and revivify the glorious culture of their forefathers.

On What Matters Armenians of the Diaspora Do Speak

There are certain things, however, concerning which we feel we have a right to speak, concerning which we feel we must speak. Our homeland on which our forefathers have lived since immemorial times, and on which we ourselves lived until the years of the last World War, still constitutes a part of Turkey, while a million and a half Armenians live as enforced refugees and immigrants throughout the four corners of the earth. Even Mt. Ararat, the pride and glory of our people and the most expressive symbol of their hopes and aspirations for a thousand years, remains under Turkish rule. Furthermore, this our homeland, the

Armenian provinces of Turkey, are separated from the free and independent Republic of Soviet Armenia, where those of our brethren who are fortunate enough to be living have made a magnificent beginning in the revival and the reconstruction of Armenian national life. What would be more natural for Armenians outside that budding new land than to want to return to their homeland and join hands with their brethren. The time has come that the Armenia which is under Turkish rule be joined to the existing free and independent Armenia within the bounds of the Soviet Union, and opportunities be granted Armenians abroad to return to their own homes and pastures, their cities and villages and live there their own lives.

Of all the Christian peoples who at some time or other in the past have been under Turkish rule, the Armenians are the only one who have as yet not secured their freedom and homeland from Turkey.

The Spirit of the Conference is in Keeping with the Hopes and Aspirations of the Armenian People

We know that the Conference convened here in San Francisco is not delegated to settle questions relating to repatriation and the settlement of boundaries. Nonetheless, it is in keeping with the spirit of the Conference that we raise our voice on behalf of a question which has become the scandal of international relations for something like three-quarters of a century. We speak on behalf of a million and a half victims of a tyranny and a terror which neither in degree nor in extent differ from the vials of wrath which the Nazis poured in this war on the innocent and helpless peoples of Europe. And we speak on behalf of the just and constructive aspirations of a people who have every right to express the hope that this time they will not be made pawns on the international chessboard of power politics. We want no less than the joining of our historic land of Armenia to the existing state of free and independent Armenia, and the repatriation there of all

Armenians abroad who wish to go there. These are our reasonable and inalienable rights. So long as these aspirations of the Armenian people remain unrealized, so long will the Armenian people remain at odds with Turkey. Until a new justice is born out of the centuries-old injustice done to the Armenians, there can be no permanent peace between them and the Turks. The Armenian people want to live at peace with their neighbors, even with Turkey, and they believe that a just and honorable peace is in the interest of all parties concerned.

"*To Serve Armenia is to Serve Civilization*"

It is no mean case which we present to this great and august Conference. It is a case which has drawn the respect and sympathy of such honorable and illustrious men as James Bryce, William Gladstone, Georges Clemenceau, Woodrow Wilson, Nikolay Lenin, Anatole France, Fridtjof Nansen, Jean Jaures, and Joseph Stalin. These men demonstrated with their deep interest and active support of the case of Armenia that they agree in spirit with the words of one of them, William Gladstone, when he said, "To serve Armenia is to serve civilization." And the great Soviet Union has demonstrated irrefutably within the brief span of twenty-five years that to serve Armenia is indeed to serve civilization.

THE DELEGATION OF THE ARMENIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA

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